

these careful steps back toward in-person operations: Dr. Brian Monahan and the entire Office of the Attending Physician, well done; everyone in the Offices of the Architect of the Capitol, the Sergeant at Arms, the Secretary of the Senate, and our colleagues on the Rules Committee and their staff. Of course, the teams who support our networks and telecommunications were working hard day and night during these weeks of remote work.

Even more broadly, I want to recognize and thank all—all—the essential Senate staff who are here with us today in person so the Senate can function. Whether they be staff members in our own offices and committee offices, all the nonpartisan professionals who serve the institution itself, and, particularly, our facilities employees, custodians, food service staff, and, of course, the men and women of the Capitol Police, we are grateful for your service, and, more importantly, your country is grateful for your service. You are literally helping our government function in the midst of this crisis.

The Senate is back in session because we have important work to do for the Nation. Critical posts throughout the Federal Government—from public health to national security and beyond—remain vacant. Qualified nominees who have been held up for too long already have become even more necessary in these uncertain times.

On the floor and in committee, the Senate will be acting on key nominations that relate directly to the safety of the American people, oversight of our coronavirus legislation, and more. We need to continue to maintain and safeguard our domestic nuclear resources. That is our first nominee, Mr. Feitel.

We need to keep protecting our Nation against foreign intelligence services. That is another nominee we will be moving soon, Mr. Evanina. Those around the world who wish harm on Americans are not going to give us a free pass until the pandemic is over, so the Senate needs to overcome obstruction and continue to act.

I don't think anybody could seriously argue that filling critical national security posts is not essential Senate business. But to any of my colleagues who may wish that we did not have to devote floor time and rollcall votes to these kinds of nominations, I would simply say: I agree with you. I agree with you.

Unfortunately, for more than 3 years now, my colleagues in Democratic leadership have used across-the-board obstruction to force floor time and even cloture votes for the kinds of sub-Cabinet level nominations that used to travel easily by voice vote. If any of my colleagues on either side wish that we could recover the Senate's tradition and spend less floor time on these sorts of nominations, I would invite them to share their view with the distinguished Democratic leadership and invite them

to change their tactics. But as long as floor time and rollcall votes remain the only way for the Senate to fill important posts, that is what we will do. We cannot let nuclear watchdogs or counterintelligence leaders stay on the sidelines.

The Senate is going to be as smart and safe as we possibly can, and we are going to show up for work like the essential workers we are. Our bosses are the American people, and they are counting on us to keep on serving.

It is good to see the Chair and all of our colleagues again. I am grateful that all 100 of us have come through the last several weeks safely and in good health. Let's work together, across the aisle, and get some more work done for the American people.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert J. Feitel, of Maryland, to be Inspector General, Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the Senate convenes a session this evening during a trying time for our Nation. As we speak, millions of our citizens are respecting stay-at-home orders and doing their part to stop the spread of this pernicious disease. Millions upon millions are now newly unemployed, dependent on the actions we take in Congress to stave off financial disaster. More than 1 million Americans have tested positive for COVID-19. More than 67,000 lives have been lost.

My home State of New York has been hit the hardest. The loss of so many precious lives, the suffering of so many

families unable to comfort or even say goodbye to a loved one have been extremely painful, enough to break your heart.

At the same time, while we are grieving, we are also inspired by the bravery of our doctors and nurses, healthcare workers, first responders, and other daily heroes—many of them immigrants—on the frontlines of this crisis. To them we owe an extraordinary debt of gratitude, an enormous thank-you that I hear out the windows of my apartment and many in New York at 7 p.m. when we applaud them as they change shifts every night—an act that brings isolated New Yorkers together.

More than that, this Congress, this Senate, must deliver the people of our country relief. We have come together on several occasions to pass historic legislation in this time of crisis. They passed 96 to 0, which shows that this body can come together in a time of crisis, which should give Americans some hope and some solace. Let me be very clear. Our work is far from over.

The Republican leader has called the Senate back into session despite the fact that the District of Columbia appears to be reaching the peak phase of this public health emergency, despite the risks we face by gathering here in the Capitol, despite the risks faced by security guards, cafeteria workers, janitors, and the staff who operate the floor of the Senate. I want to take a moment to thank each and every one of them—and all of those Capitol Hill workers—for being here today, for doing their jobs so that we may do ours.

If we are going to be here, if we are going to make these fine people come into work in these conditions, let the Senate at least conduct the Nation's business and focus like a laser on COVID-19. At the moment, the Republican leader has scheduled no significant COVID-related business for the floor of the Senate. Tonight, we will vote on a nomination to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Later this week, the Republican majority on the Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing for a manifestly unqualified, totally divisive, rightwing judicial nominee.

When the topic of COVID-related legislation has come up, Leader McCONNELL has simply drawn partisan lines in the sand. First, he has suggested that States and localities should go bankrupt—let them go bankrupt. He has since realized his mistake and walked that back. But then, only a few days later, the leader vowed to block any bill that does not include legal immunity for big corporations that operate unsafely and put workers in harm's way.

The Republican leader said that his redline in a future relief package is not a national testing program; it is not more help for small businesses or housing assistance for families; it is not rescuing our healthcare system. Leader McCONNELL will not support new legislation to fight this evil disease unless

it gives big corporations legal immunity.

Judicial nominees, legal immunity for big corporations—in all due respect, Republican leader, these are not the Nation's most urgent priorities right now. There are much more pressing issues that deserve not only the Senate's focus and attention but should be the subject of bipartisan negotiations for the next emergency relief package, known as COVID 4.

Here are just a few. Our health system is under enormous strain. We need more money to flow to hospitals, community health centers, and nursing homes. Essential workers—many on low wages—work longer shifts at great personal risk. They deserve hazard pay. Each first of the month brings new rent payments to families suffering financial hardship. Relief for renters and homeowners must be on the agenda. State and local governments are stretched to the breaking point, imperiling the jobs of teachers, firefighters, police officers, food inspectors, and other public employees. State, local, and Tribal governments deserve Federal support.

As we begin to contemplate a return to normal economic activity down the road, one thing is certain: We are not testing nearly enough Americans—not nearly enough—to know when the moment to safely reopen our country has arrived. Despite the length of this crisis—now measured in months—the administration has yet to develop an adequate national strategy on testing.

These are urgent issues we should focus on. These are problems the American people want us to come together—Democrat and Republican—to solve. These are the topics—not redlines in the sand on ideological wish lists—that we should be debating and negotiating for a future bill. The Republican leader himself acknowledged that there isn't enough testing on the frontlines, but he has reconvened the Senate to do nothing to address the problem.

As we return to work under the cloud of crisis, Senate Republicans should concentrate on helping us recover from COVID-19, not confirming rightwing judges or protecting big businesses that threaten to put workers at serious risk.

The administration has done a very poor job of implementing parts of the CARES Act and the most recent supplemental emergency legislation. So Democrats have urged our Republican colleagues to, at a minimum, hold hearings on the implementation of COVID-related legislation passed by Congress. It is a positive step that Senate Republicans are now beginning to follow our request and considering scheduling some oversight hearings in the coming weeks with key White House Coronavirus Task Force officials.

These hearings are very important. Congress can make laws but only the executive can implement them. But a time-honored responsibility of Con-

gress, given to us by the Founding Fathers, is oversight, to make sure that the executive is executing the laws. So we need to hear from Dr. Fauci, Dr. Birx, Secretary Mnuchin, Chairman Powell. We need to know why so many small businesses are having trouble getting loans, while larger and more well-connected businesses are not. We need to know why unemployment insurance checks are failing to get to workers.

Maybe, above all, we need to know why we still don't have enough tests. Months ago, in early March, here is what President Trump said: "Anybody who needs a test gets a test."

It was a lie then; it remains a lie now. Administration officials promised 27 million test kits would be available by the end of March. It is now May, and it still hasn't happened.

The President continues to pressure States and businesses to reopen, but he refuses to take responsibility for the one thing that would allow them to do it safely—testing. Do you know how the White House knows it is safe to hold a press conference? They test all the reporters before allowing them into the briefing room. What does the White House do before the President holds a meeting with business leaders? They take everyone's temperature and then administer a coronavirus test.

Why on Earth is there not a plan for the rest of the country, the whole country, not just the President and the White House? Many experts—most experts—say that we need far more tests than we have.

If we had been on the same track as countries that use nationwide testing to stop their outbreaks, like South Korea and Canada, we would be testing 2 million people a day right now, and already tens of millions would have been tested. Some experts say we should increase capacity to 30 million tests per week later this year. Others are calling on it to be even higher. Right now, we are testing only 230,000 people a day—a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed.

We need testing capacity now, but we will also need it later. Some believe that COVID-19 will resurge later in the year—perhaps with a vengeance. There were reports today that the CDC has projected a growing number of deaths from coronavirus into the summer, and yet we still don't have adequate testing or even an indication that the administration is focused on the problem. If, God forbid, this virus comes back in the summer or the fall, the best way to deal with it is testing, short of a vaccine, which we will not have by then. Testing, we don't have it.

The lack of a national testing strategy, the painfully slow buildup of testing capacity, the gross exaggerations of success by the administration has gone on for too long. This administration needs to take on responsibility for a national testing regime and deliver on it immediately. It is, in the eyes of most experts, the best way to deal with

the current crisis and certainly the best way to prevent a future crisis from growing out of control.

So there can be no doubt that this will be one of the strangest sessions of the U.S. Senate in modern history. Our offices will be emptied, our staffs working from home. Senate Democrats will not hold regular caucus meetings in person. We will do them by teleconference. Anyone who comes to the well of the Senate to speak will wipe down their microphone and desks with a disinfectant and refrain from the usual practice of handing our speeches over to the Senate reporters. We will wear masks in the hallways of this Capitol and on our way home. We will vote in small groups, and we will not do what comes so naturally to every public official—shake hands.

The American people are watching us right now. They expect us to do our jobs. They expect us to come together to address the issues that really matter. We cannot—cannot—and must not merely go back to business as usual in the Senate. It is not business as usual out in our country. Leader MCCONNELL must hear this.

Right now, Leader MCCONNELL and the Republican majority should shelve the divisive judicial fights and the partisan, divisive redlines. Let's focus on working together to heal the sick, employ the unemployed, stabilize the economy, and making sure the administration properly executes the laws we pass so that we can prepare our country for the day when we will finally, God willing, return to normal.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am learning the etiquette of the mask as we try to make certain we set a good example for our country that is very attentive to the public healthcare crisis we face.

I listened carefully to the remarks of the Republican majority leader. He spoke about the reconvening of the Senate this day, and he talked about the work that we achieved a few weeks ago in passing the CARES Act—\$2.2 trillion in rescue funds for America—by 96 to nothing. Then, by a voice vote, we passed \$484 billion more—almost \$2.7 trillion. That is an amount that is far in excess of the annual Federal budget of the United States of America for domestic discretionary spending, and we did it in a matter of days and weeks. We knew that we were facing, as the President characterized it, a national emergency, and we still do.

The Senate is here today because, against medical advice, the majority leader has brought us back to Washington. We know what the standard is

in the District of Columbia for the people who live here—to stay home; not to meet in groups; to work away from your normal working place to protect yourself, your family, and everyone else. Yet we are back in town. The majority leader tells us we don't take days off. He says we are here to do the Nation's business, which can only be done—that it is only possible—when we are here. He talks about taking careful steps back. I have been waiting for the majority leader to announce what the business of this week will be. Boy, there are a lot of things we should be doing.

I know, back home, from the endless telephone conference calls that I am involved in and from the comments by my friends and neighbors in Illinois, that there are many unanswered questions which they would like this Congress to address. We have been waiting carefully, expectantly, for the majority leader to announce what we are doing this week that merits this return. It is not just because Members of the Senate are being asked to come back. Listen, that is what we ran to do. We promised the people of our States that we would be there to do the business of the Senate and the Nation when called upon. Certainly, I want to keep that promise. All of us do. Yet it is appropriate to ask exactly what it is this week that we will be doing.

There is a noncontroversial nomination that will be before us in a matter of 2 hours, which is likely to pass by an overwhelming vote. That can't be the reason. There must be more, but what is it? There are lots of things which the majority leader could bring us back to do. It appears one of the things he is most intent on is to make certain that we consider the nomination of a young district court judge from the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This individual was nominated last year to serve on the district court in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. His name is Justin Walker.

Justin Walker has a distinction. He is one of nine Presidential nominees who has been sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee by the White House who has been judged “not qualified” by the American Bar Association. It was the American Bar Association that said his absence of any significant trial experience disqualified him to serve at the lowest Federal court—a lifetime appointment, make no mistake. Yet it seems Justin Walker is well connected with the majority leader by his having served on his staff, at least as an intern, but it may be more—I am not sure—and other connections that I am not aware of. It is enough that his nomination has become a priority for the U.S. Senate, which is interesting. Despite any “career” on the Federal district court of less than 6 or 8 months and despite the fact that he has had no trial experience by which to take that job, the majority leader, Senator McConnell, wants this man to be elevated to the second highest court in

the land—the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

I don't understand it. It is certainly hard to argue that this is part of a response to a national health emergency in America. It has nothing to do with it. It is a political decision, clearly, to elevate this man—of all of the members of the Federal district court bench across the Nation—to be next in line to be considered for the Supreme Court. I hope he has seen a Federal trial in the time he has served on the district court in Kentucky. I guess we will find out in the hearing that has been called for on Wednesday of this week.

So, when the majority leader comes to us and says we have important nominations that deal with national security, I am sorry, but Judge Walker is not one of them. What we have in his confirmation hearing is a political decision for political advancement at the risk of this Senate and the hundreds of people who are working here today because we have been called back.

What else could the Senate Judiciary Committee do other than to entertain Senator McConnell's former intern to be raised to the second highest court in the land? There are a number of things we might consider.

I think one is contact tracing. Contact tracing is going to be the key to opening our economy in America. Contact tracing says, if you have been exposed to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, that we have ways—technological ways and other ways—to trace you and notify you. That also raises questions about information and privacy, which is one of the issues the Senate Judiciary Committee considers.

There is the Bureau of Prisons. Currently, at the Bureau of Prisons, there is a raging conflict because there is raging infection. This is not the only correctional institution that faces that, but it does. Guards, correction officers, as well as the inmates themselves, are at risk because COVID-19 is in the ranks of those serving time in our prisons. Many States—even the Federal Government to some extent—are considering the appropriate policy to keep America safe but also to treat these individuals with fairness, especially those who are working for the Federal Government and are doing what we ask them to do. That is under the jurisdiction of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Instead of this Kentucky nominee of Senator McConnell's, whom he wants to move up quickly to the second highest court of the land, shouldn't we be asking basic questions about the policies of the Bureau of Prisons?

There are immigration issues too. It is interesting when you take a look at the spokespersons when it comes to medicine. So many of them—not all of them by any means—are new immigrants to America. I salute all of our healthcare heroes. We have signs in our yard at home, and others around the neighborhood do as well. We can't thank these men and women enough

for going to work every day and risking their lives every day to keep us safe—doctors, nurses, lab technicians, those working in nursing homes—and to treat those who are infected and save the lives of the people we love.

As you listen on television to their comments about the risks they are taking and the costs they are paying with their families and others, I note how many of them are new immigrants to this country. It is no surprise. Many of these people—well-trained and educated—come to the United States for opportunities they can't get in their home countries, and in terms of our healthcare, we prosper because of that decision. Yet, when it comes to decisions by the U.S. Senate in dealing with immigration and healthcare, you would think that we would have no use for these people.

Take the DACA protectees—those who, under President Obama's Executive order, have the protection of DACA so they will not be deported from the United States and can legally work in the United States. These are important people. I tried, with Senator Graham, in a bipartisan amendment back 6 weeks ago, to say that their legal status in America would be respected at least until the end of this calendar year so they could continue to be here without the fear of deportation, and it was stopped.

According to Senator Graham, the comment from one of his colleagues was: There go Durbin and Graham again, working on the Dream Act.

Yes, I am. I am still working on the Dream Act. Do you know why I am doing this? It is that, out of the 780,000 DACA protectees, at least 41,000 of them are in the healthcare field today.

When it come to those here in the United States who have temporary protected status—at least 11,000 of them—are we ready to say publicly what some Members of the Senate say privately: “Let them leave. We don't need them”? I am not going to say that. I know better, and so do families across America. Thank goodness for these healthcare heroes—those born in the United States and those not born in the United States—who have come here to help us through this public healthcare crisis. Immigration is an issue for the Senate Judiciary Committee. Will there be a hearing this week? None have been posted that relate to this COVID-19 challenge. We haven't even addressed it.

What about profiteering? Wouldn't that be an interesting issue for us to have a hearing on in the Senate Judiciary Committee—violations of current law? As I mentioned, I spent my time in telephone conference with a lot of people who are buying protective equipment—administrators of hospitals, clinics, and medical professionals themselves. They report what is happening. It came from Fairfield, IL, which is a smaller community in downstate Illinois, where the hospital administrator said: Senator, we used to

pay 22 cents for a surgical gown at this hospital. The price is now between \$11 and \$20 apiece. Somebody is ripping them off. They know it, I know it, and the Senate Judiciary Committee should know it too.

This is another issue we could take up and that I hope we would consider. Instead, we have MCCONNELL's nominee for the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, which he considers to be vital national business. I don't see it that way. What I see is a lot of people here who are gathered in the Capitol, doing their jobs as they were hired to do and as they are dedicated to perform—at risk. I am prepared to be here because that is what I ran for office to do, but I would hope it would be for something substantive in order to deal with real issues of national security and, certainly, issues related to this national health emergency.

The District of Columbia and the States on either side of the District—Maryland and Virginia—all continue to record new cases of COVID infection and death. They have not seen a 2-week decline in new COVID cases, which the White House announced as a guideline a few weeks ago, that is necessary to begin the first phase of reopening. The opposite is true. In this Washington Metropolitan Area, where we have been called in to work today, we find a COVID hotspot. In the week ending last Thursday, the District, Maryland, and Virginia recorded 20,000 new COVID cases—a staggering amount of sickness and suffering. All three jurisdictions remain under stay-at-home orders to try to curb the spread of this deadly virus in order to save lives and ease the burden on our exhausted medical workers.

My State of Illinois also remains under a stay-at-home order as do more than half of the States. Not one State in America has yet to meet the first requirement of safety to reopen our schools and businesses and communities in this pandemic. That first requirement is a 2-week decline in new infections. Like millions of Americans, Members of the Senate and our staffs have been working from home for the last 6 weeks to try to save lives and keep our health system from collapsing.

I do have to take exception to the statement made by Senator MCCONNELL when he said: Across America, you don't get to take days off. I have been on the phone every single day—my colleagues, the same—talking to people in their own home States, dealing with challenges and issues that face businesses and labor unions and charities and hospitals. The list is so long that I don't know where to start or where to end. Yet he would suggest I was home, taking a day off.

Out of my home, Senator MCCONNELL, my kitchen became my surrogate office, and I am sure many Senators will say the same. I worked as hard there as I do in this building—maybe harder on some days. So we didn't take

days off. We have negotiated a nearly half-trillion-dollar COVID emergency aid package for our home States—a life support package to provide much needed resources for testing and for our heroic healthcare workers.

When you take a look at the issue of lost revenue, I spoke to the mayor of the District of Columbia a few minutes ago. She talked about revenue that is, obviously, lost to her—hundreds of millions of dollars that she has to face in the next budget—all related to the COVID and all related to the downturn in our economy. The same thing is true in my State and virtually every other State.

This COVID crisis has taken its toll on business activity, on the attendance at events, on purchases. It means less revenue going into the coffers of States and local governments. We provided \$150 billion for this purpose in the original CARES bill. Many of us believe we need to stand up for them again. You can't give speeches on the floor about your respect for the police and first responders and firefighters and then say it is a darned shame that the people who employ them will not be able to pay them in the months ahead.

As for this notion of declaring bankruptcy, what an economic disaster that would be if States and local governments were declaring bankruptcy right and left, not to mention the real hardship it would cause among first responders and those healthcare workers, including nurses, whom we value so much. So many of them who are employed by State and local governments would suffer if the suggestion of bankruptcy went forward.

We can legislate without violating public health guidelines and risking making this pandemic worse. So the urgent business of the Senate should be the COVID challenge that we face everywhere. In our coming back to Washington, why isn't that a priority that has been announced? At this moment, we don't know what will happen with the Senate's agenda tomorrow or in the 2 or 3 days after. If it relates to COVID-19, count me in. If it relates to true national security, count me in. Yet, if we are just coming here because of a promise made to a 38-year-old Federal judge in Kentucky, it doesn't meet the test. As I mentioned before, this nominee was judged “not qualified,” and he has made statements that are openly hostile to the Affordable Care Act, which I would like to address for a moment.

When we passed the Affordable Care Act about 10 years ago, the goal was to reduce the number of Americans who had no health insurance. It was successful. In the State of Illinois, it cut in half the number of uninsured—people without health insurance. Its critics didn't vote for it; have not come up with an alternative to it; and like this Justin Walker, the Federal judge in Kentucky, have been openly contemptuous of the notion of moving our Na-

tion toward full healthcare coverage. I don't think that argument is as compelling today, under the current circumstances, if it ever were. All of us appreciate the need for a real safety net. All of us understand, without real health insurance protection at this moment in history, the people we love—our children, our spouses, our parents—would be at risk because they wouldn't have access to good, quality healthcare.

This is a situation in which this judicial nominee—Mr. WALKER, who was found “not qualified” for the Federal district court position—is now openly contemptuous of the Affordable Care Act and argues that it should be eliminated at this moment in history—the assurance of healthcare and health insurance protection. Is he the person we want on the second highest court in the land? In the midst of the most deadly health crisis and the most devastating economic catastrophe of our times, the majority leader's agenda remains unchanged—to fill the Federal bench at any cost.

The Trump administration's response to the COVID-19 crisis has shocked many people. America has 5 percent of the world's population. Yet we have one-third of the world's COVID infections and more than 25 percent of the COVID deaths. Let me say that again. America has 5 percent of the world's population and more than 25 percent of the COVID deaths. As of this morning, 67,682 Americans have died of this ferocious virus. They include my friends, people I know, and members of my family. In my State of Illinois, we have lost 2,618 men, women, and children to this pandemic. When the Senate left Washington, DC, 6 weeks ago to work from home, there were 5,000 COVID infections in my State. There are more than 50,000 today. We are No. 2 in testing, so our numbers, I think, are more accurate than in many other States.

Americans feel great anxiety and sadness, but these healthcare professionals keep our heads up and our focus very clear. These essential heroes are doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, pharmacists, and the men and women who make sure there is food in these hospitals and that the floors are clean. They include postal workers, grocery store clerks, truckdrivers, law enforcement officers, teachers who continue to teach our kids and help to keep them safe. They are all part of this national effort. I would say that the notion of homeschooling, or e-schooling, which is now very common across America, has renewed the appreciation of many parents for what the teachers are doing every single day to help their kids.

In my State and every State, people of color have suffered more than their share of COVID sickness and death, partly because of longstanding health inequities that leave people of color with more preexisting health conditions, partly because of barriers to healthcare, and partly because Black and Brown people fill so many jobs

that are deemed essential. One major hospital in Chicago told me that half the people who died from COVID-19 in their hospital were uninsured, many of them Hispanic. They are people who may or may not have health insurance. They are desperate to work and earn a living. Some of them are afraid that they or some member of their family may be deported if they show up to a hospital to report themselves sick, so they wait until it is literally too late, and they die.

We have seen our economy shut down and a lot of hardship as a result. Many owners of businesses, restaurants, and others have talked to me and others in the Senate about how soon we can reopen. But most of them, not all of them, most of them understand that going through this kind of shutdown of our economy and our personal lives is bad—bad if we do it one time; it is horrible to think about doing it a second time if we reopen too soon in the wrong way.

In my State, 830,000 people filed for unemployment insurance between March 1 and April 25. They are among the 30 million Americans who filed for unemployment since COVID came to America—40 million. That is the fastest, deepest loss of jobs we have ever seen. To reopen our States and Nation before we have done the hard and careful work required to open safely only risks more infection, more death, more lost jobs, and more economic hardship. Reopening before we can reopen safely risks overwhelming our hospitals and ICUs. We need to listen to public health experts, the doctors and the nurses, many of whom have worked past exhaustion. We need to be responsible and not give in to chance on the street.

What is the essential work that the Senate should be doing? Investigating why we do not have enough testing in this country that is essential to reopening the economy and working with State, local, and Tribal governments to help them hire and train the estimated 300,000 contact tracers needed to reopen America safely. Rather than forcing States to bid against each other, we have to plead with the President to use his authority under the Defense Production Act to produce here in America the respirators and other PPE that is essential for workers and their families. We have to provide oversight for the Paycheck Protection Program and make sure those loans are going to small business as we originally intended and not to wealthy hedge fund operators. We ought to be working to shore up the U.S. Postal Service, an essential public service created under the Constitution. What a reminder it has been to all of us staying at home, watching that letter carrier come by every single day. It is a bright spot, with his big smile, greeted by everybody on my street with gratitude for his continuing work day in and day out. That is what our Postal Service is. For them to be degraded and insulted

by the critics is totally unfair—totally unfair.

We ought to be making plans to ensure that every American voter can vote by mail in the November election, given the likelihood that this lethal virus will still be threatening us. If this Senate is going to gather as a body in this pandemic against the medical advice of some and the sound judgment of others, let's make sure our work is essential. We are still waiting for a report from our Republican majority leader about the agenda that brought us to Washington and that brings us here this week, ready to work, ready to address the COVID-19 crisis that faces our country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT J. FEITEL

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, clean and constant nuclear energy is one of the key pillars of America's energy security. Nuclear powerplants supply 20 percent of our Nation's electricity and more than 50 percent of our clean energy.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is the independent Federal agency that regulates these powerplants to protect public health and safety. It is a very important job. These independent regulatory structures and this specific one has successfully benefited the American people for decades by ensuring the safe operation of our nuclear reactors.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's inspector general is responsible for detecting and preventing waste, fraud, and abuse, as well as mismanagement at the Commission.

President Trump has nominated Mr. Robert Feitel to serve as inspector general of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. He did that last October. Mr. Feitel has been reported out of the Environment and Public Works Committee by unanimous vote in December. Today the Senate will vote to confirm him.

Mr. Feitel is well qualified. He brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this important position. Mr. Feitel has spent more than 25 years as an attorney at the Department of Justice and at the Federal Bureau of Investigation. During his long career Mr. Feitel received numerous achievement awards for his excellent service.

Mr. Feitel will be the first new inspector general at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in over 25 years. His nomination comes at a pivotal time for both the nuclear industry and the Commission. Some utilities are seeking to operate their nuclear plants for 20 more years, while others are shutting

down, and they are shutting their reactors before their licenses even expire. The Commission is also preparing to license new nuclear technologies that will be essential to our clean energy future.

This time of unprecedented activity requires a fully staffed and a fully functional agency. The Commission needs an inspector general to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission. Mr. Feitel is that individual. Mr. Feitel is a man of character whose commitment to upholding justice makes him an ideal candidate for the position.

I encourage the entire Senate to vote today to confirm Mr. Robert Feitel to serve as the inspector general of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, the Senate was gavelled out about 6 weeks ago now. We passed the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act on March 25, and here it is May 4. Since that time, the global battle to defeat the coronavirus has only intensified.

There have been some who questioned the wisdom of the Senate coming back to Washington and convening, but I think we need to be here, and we need to do our jobs. We know how to do this safely. We know how to social distance. We know how to wash our hands and not touch our face. Those are the responsibilities each of us bear to one another not to spread this virus.

But if there is such a thing as essential and nonessential workers—and I don't think that distinction is one we should discuss because 26 million Americans are not nonessential workers; they are absolutely essential to our economy and to our way of life. But, make no mistake, self-government is essential under any construction, under any definition of that word.

Our system was not made to run on autopilot, so it is appropriate that we show up and that we do our job and we protect the American people and do everything we can to defeat this virus from a public health standpoint but also to do what is necessary to maintain a lifeline to the economy and the workers who are an essential component of it so that, when we defeat this virus, we will be prepared for people to go back to work in full and keep our economy and jobs growing again.

We know that about 3.5 million cases have been confirmed worldwide, and roughly a third of these cases are here in the United States. Tragically, we have lost 65,000 Americans to this cruel virus, but, heroically, our healthcare workers have been on the job each and